

t'0

This blog chronicles my life and times as I inch closer and closer to the mythical milestone that has taunted aging adventurers for centuries... Thirty. 300 days and counting...

\$ Life - What I'm up to...

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Between the Gray

[Grammy goes to...](#)

1 year ago

Friday, October 9, 2009



This was my shortest stay (36 hours), but HK made enough of an impression that it's now definitely one of my top 5 favorite cities in the world... sometimes I think these types of super-short, in-and-out trips are the best because you're on a curiosity-charged, adventure-laded adrenaline rush that propels you to see any and everything you can... That was my mindset, though i was surprisingly more focused than usual on what i wanted to witness... and I feel good about what I got to experience in such a short period of time... For this trip, all I really wanted to do was just take in the scenery and beauty of the city.



(left to right: HK skyline from Kowloon across Victoria Harbour; downtown HK)

As those of you who know me already know, there aren't many things I love in life more than a great skyline... (no, not [talking chili](#) here my messy Midwestern friends... btw, how did something that originated in Cincinnati get named "skyline"... the Cincy skyline is about as memorable as a trip to the gas station... Ok, it's not that bad, and I love Cincy, but still..??.. I guess they thought naming it '[Poop-colored River](#)' wouldn't do as good a job selling 3-ways :))...

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(l to r: Skyline? or, uh, Skyline?)

But yeah, skylines... love them, and I'm determined to put together my own top 10 list of the best in the world (list is coming together nicely).. Hong Kong, definitely will be in the top 3... it's got all the elements: back to back to back buildings decorated with lights and tattooed with neon. Whether you think it's classy or corny, you can't deny the impact of the visual display.. Add in the cocoon of nature that surrounds the island - Mountains on two sides; Jungle terrain darting between the buildings; and the beautiful Victoria Harbour...seriously, this is a tough view to beat

G-Track

Action

00000501



I spent most of my time hunting for different vantage points of these breathtaking views...

Star Ferry - I have to give the [Lonely Planet](#) folks props on this one... they were right on with this reco... for about a quarter (yes, \$0.25) you can enjoy probably the simplest yet most satiating 10 minutes on earth - especially if you're a skyline connoisseur like me... loved the Harbour view at night, and the panorama view of Hong Kong from Kowloon is probably one of the most impressive steel & concrete vistas on earth.



(l to r: Hong Kong from Star Ferry dock in Kowloon; Skyline from BLT Prime Kowloon)

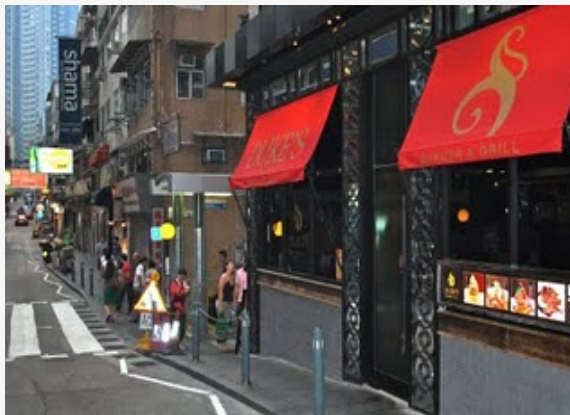
The Peak – This is actually an area of town that's one of the [most expensive stretches of real estate in the world](#) at about \$6000/sq ft... you definitely pay for the view - and, at that price, hopefully an army of gnomes that do your laundry, trim your nose hairs, and give you nightly pedicures... but for those of us who aren't raking in \$20 million/year, there's the Peak Tram to get us acquainted with the neighborhood... a short, nearly vertical, ride up the side of the mountain deposits you into a modern/touristy shopping center with high-end restaurants and random clothing and souvenir shops... I didn't mind so much since I was just going for the aerial photo of HK... so, of course, as soon as I got there, a mini-[monsoon](#) rolled in... they closed the viewing deck and I sat and stared out at the torrential rains from Bubba Gump Shrimp (ok, not ALL high end restaurants..) for over 2 hours... just as I was about to give up on this part of my visit, the clouds cleared... the nice lady guarding the door waved at me to come get a quick look, and I enjoyed literally about 7 minutes of no rain - just enough to see and appreciate the Birdseye view of HK at night... perfect.





(l to r: Peak Tram ready for departure; view through the misty rain atop the Peak)

Other than the vistas, Hong Kong has everything the average jet-setter could want, all happening within a surprisingly super-diverse spectrum of people. Tons of expats, Aussies, and Europeans... definitely a few American's mixing it up as well... If Singapore was modern and easy, Hong Kong is sophisticated and sexy... It's definitely my kinda town.



(l to r: People watching in SoHo; Duke's - aka the Best Burger in the World)

I loved the SoHo area, a mix of NYC-style shops and boutiques and San Fran's rolling hills and tiny streets.... I had literally the best burger of my life at Duke's, which sits on a perfect corner for people watching... I dodged meals the whole time I was in Asia, but Hong Kong was definitely a different story... Yeah I love and appreciate Culture... but I think I love the hybrid cities the best - culture, diversity, style, attitude, knowledge, know-how... natural beauty mixed with artificial luxury..

What can I say, I've always been a '[best of both worlds](#)' kinda guy.....

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Posted by \$ at 12:13 PM 1 comments Links to this post 

Thursday, October 8, 2009

TA

Vietnam...

This was where I was most excited to go. Heard it was amazing – history, culture, struggle, survival...babes... etc.

Turns out I was too excited...

Within 40 minutes of touching down in Ho Chi Minh City, my iPhone was missing/stolen and I was the [grumpiest Brown boy in Southeast Asia](#). I cried for a good 24 straight hours upon realizing my phone was missing, and accosted every bellboy within a ½ mile radius in search of the damn thing... one of the guys - who I swear is listening to my MJ Tribute collection or playing Tetris or singing some twangy Vietnamese love song on [LaDiDa](#) – looked guilty as hell, but short of strip-searching the dude, I had no recourse...

Note to self: Staple iPhone to forearm upon entering Vietnam.

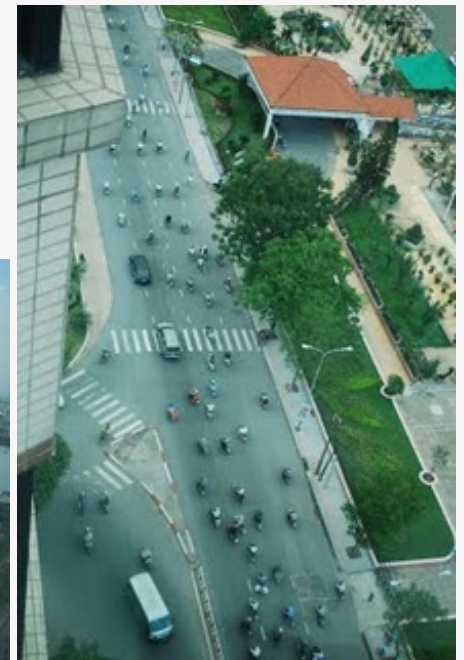
**editors note: Thankfully, my incredible employer reimbursed me for the phone, which btw cost \$700 due to [Apple & AT&T's fiendish policy](#) of [kicking a brotha when he's down](#).*

Ok, thievery aside... Vietnam was a cool place. Next time, I plan on getting out into the countryside, spend some time in the Mekong Delta and along the eastern coast. But Ho Chi Minh definitely was one of the most interesting and enticing places I've ever been. It's a land of contrast and contradiction... a formerly war-torn country that's now become a focal point of global commerce and multi-national business. Gleaming 5-star hotels nestled next to dreary, beaten down alleyways. Life is easy for the rich and grueling for the not-so-rich. A lot of Asia is like that, but for some reason it seems to be less hidden, more blatant, in Vietnam.



(left to right: land of contrast - wedding day in the city; long day on the sidewalk)

My hotel was very nice – Renaissance Riverside Saigon... top notch service – mercedes benz airport pick-up, personal greetings from everyone on the staff ("Welcome Mr. Shaikh sir"), big-baller-check-in process in my actual room, and outstanding in-room dining... though that case of the Missing Phone did cast a shadow on otherwise immaculate hotel experience. (Sending waves of negative karma to whoever it was that swiped my phone....)



(left and right: views from my hotel room)

The most defining characteristic of Ho Chi Minh is the constant buzzing of the nearly 5 Million motorcycles that swarm the city streets. It's surreal to watch as packs of moto's dart across the roads in all directions. And it's not just macho dudes or old retired vets riding these things (like your average U.S. town), there are literally entire FAMILIES on bikes... I counted a total of 7 people on one tiny motorcycle at one busy intersection - dad, mom, grandma, 3 kids, and an infant on the dad/driver's lap..!?! [Crossing](#)

[the street is an adventure](#). There are absolutely NO TRAFFIC LAWS.... Or, if there are, the entire population has defiantly lifted their collective [middle fingers to the law](#)... this scene is wild...



(left to right: makin' friends on the moto-way; lanes? what lanes?)

Definitely the highlight of my trip was jumping on the back of a mototaxi at 2am and racing hungry and helmet-less across the unruly HCM streets. The driver was about 60 years old but age didn't stop him from stepping on the gas and talking smack to me for hanging onto his waist so tight... seriously, i hung onto gramps like he was my estranged lover... but screw it, i was havin' fun and we were singing some Vietnamese version of ['Free Fallin'](#) so it was all good.

Other than the bike rides through the night... other highlights included:

- partying at Gossip nightclub (shoutout to the three locals dudes who continually invited me to their tables to party with their respective crews... i dont think they ever saw a 6'4 brown dude so i was like the [funny chimpanzee at the zoo](#))...

- amazing food, even for the seafood averse like myself... had some great Indian food at Mumtaz (fellas, invest in some AC though!!)...

- and of course, the legendary Vietnamese women did not disappoint... definitely the Tri-Delts of the [Asian sorority row](#)... maybe that's why the GI's didnt want to go home....





(left to right: my friendly neighborhood tour guide; \$5 prada shades anyone?; the trio of sales girls that worked so much \$\$ from me that i had to turn to plastic.)

Chao ung, from vietnam.

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(Notre Dame Cathedral, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam)

Posted by \$ at 9:46 PM 0 comments [Links to this post](#) 

Sunday, October 4, 2009



The first stop on my Asian Odyssey was a familiar one... was in Singapore less than a year ago to visit my friend and check out the scene, but was equally excited for the return trip... I love this place. Everything is easy. All the amenities of the Western World neatly packaged into into 250 sq miles of clean streets, cool buildings, and cooler people. You get the benefits of Asian culture without having to wade knee-deep in [Dim Sum...](#) Anything you want is a short cab ride or quick ATM withdrawal away (though I found the latter a reoccurring theme in Asia...).

Singapore is **DisneyLand**.

An untarnished beacon of joy, inspiration, and endless happy endings.





(top row: Magic Kingdom (l) and Downtown Singapore skyline (r); bottom: Epcot Center (l) and Esplanade arts center on the Bay in Sing.)

Artificial and exaggerated in some ways but not enough to make you think twice about kickin' it at the Magic Kingdom or spinnin' in teacups with Cinderella... in fact, that's the reason you love it... perfect blend of fantasy and reality.



(Welcome and declaration plaques at Disneyland... same could apply to Singapore)

It's "Asia Lite" or "Asia for Beginners"... your risk-free, trial version before you move all in for the real thing a few hundred miles to the north, east or west. Definitely a comfortable transition spot for all you imminent ex-pats with far-east-fetishes but not yet blackbelts in [Mahjong](#) or not quite maestros with chopsticks.

It's more expensive than most of its neighbors in the Region, but it's hard to put a price on convenience. Asian massage? Hit up Orchard Tower and you'll find a spiritual sanctuary of rubdown specialists. And trust me, they don't look like [Biff](#) or [Bertha](#). (btw, why is it that some names seem to predetermine the fate of an individual... have you ever met an attractive Bertha?? Or a cool Beatrice? Funny Sebastian?... parents, use your responsibility

wisely.... Ka\$h is a good bet...)

At Orchard, there are literally 3 levels of wall-to-wall super-spa options. All in a clean, air-conditioned, safe, and inviting building... all it needs is a pearly white gate out front... [Heaven](#).

Massages aside... [Clark Quay](#) is the hotspot for dining, drinking, and dancing. Tons of options from karaoke and dive bars to some serious Asian raving at Zirca (say waddup to my boy Melvin if u go). The taxi drivers are all nice (call the older ones "Uncle" out of respect) and the service industry is top notch (another common theme in most of Asia). Missing home? Get you some wings and enjoy the big, uh, screens, at the local Hooters... And if you want to hear the best band in the city amidst the best 'scenery' in all of Asia - hit up Brix at the Hyatt... Fellas, leave your credit cards and [7-year itches](#) at home.



(Hooters Singapore staff posing for a calendar photoshoot. It's called right place, right time.)

So yeah.... Singapore gets 5-stars from me. Only drawback at all is that it's bloody hot/humid year round... but that's a small price to pay for Wonderlands, wild rides, and the rest of its "Disney" attractions... I will definitely be back... Soon.... It's a [Small World](#) after all...

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Posted by \$ at 10:12 AM 0 comments [Links to this post](#) 

Wednesday, September 23, 2009



Less then 3 weeks till i turn 30!! Man, time has flown.... let the countdown begin!

ZERO TILL 30!

0 days 0 hours 0 minutes and 0 se

Will try to pick up the pace of my posts from here on out....

also, since a bunch of yall are asking... ok... a few of you... alright, fine... since i'm sure there's like 1, maaaaybe 2 of you who thought about it in passing while waiting for your pizza to cool down (one of my top 10 pet

peeves in life is burning the roof of my mouth. hate it. painful, unappetizing, and greasy , all at once.)... YES. I plan on keeping the blog alive after I turn the big THREE OHH.

At least until it evolves into something more spectacular... or morphs into a mental junkyard of useless thoughts, which is highly likely.

Stay tuned....

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Posted by \$ at 9:14 AM 0 comments [Links to this post](#) 

Tuesday, September 22, 2009



I started my new assignment at work on September 1st. Forgot to tell you. Was too busy applying for Visas, buying luggage, mismanaging my finances, dropping off dry cleaning and practicing my Chinese pickup lines...

Yeah, the new job is going to be different then my last role in a lot of ways and, while there are definitely some tradeoffs, I am really pumped about it...

I'll still be slangin' laundry detergent (Mom, aren't ya proud??), but no longer for you high-class, [high-rolling ballers in the U.S....](#) I'll now lead External Relations for all Developing Markets for P&G's Fabric Care business... basically trying to get moms in Asia, Africa, South America, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East to buy Tide.





It will be less events and MC'ing, but a ton more International travel... going from [Paris Hilton](#) to the Beijing Hilton.. red carpets to persian rugs... Beverly Hills to the barrio... I'm definitely gonna miss meeting celebs and rocking 3-piece suits, but i know I'll get my kicks from travelling the world and immersing myself in new cultures and experiences (including the [\\$15 hour-long full body massages](#) in Ho Chi Minh)... though, I still will be based in good ol' Cincinnati, Ohio - the chili, [pork](#), and khaki-pants-wearing capital of the World... thank god..

Sooo.... anyway, my first trip in the new role was to Asia - hit up 6 countries in 3 weeks - Japan, Singapore, Vietnam, Hong Kong, China, and the Philippines.... I knew i liked this part of the world before, but this trip upgraded my infatuation to a full-on love affair...



Yin Yang: Hong Kong skyline from Victoria Harbour (Kowloon); A peak along The Great Wall

Was a wild, enlightening, eye-opening experience... the next few posts will be about what i lived, learned, and lost (\$500 reward for whoever kicks the ass of the little Vietnamese kid who swiped my Iphone!) along the way...

TBC.....

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Posted by \$ at 10:24 PM 0 comments [Links to this post](#)

Wednesday, August 26, 2009

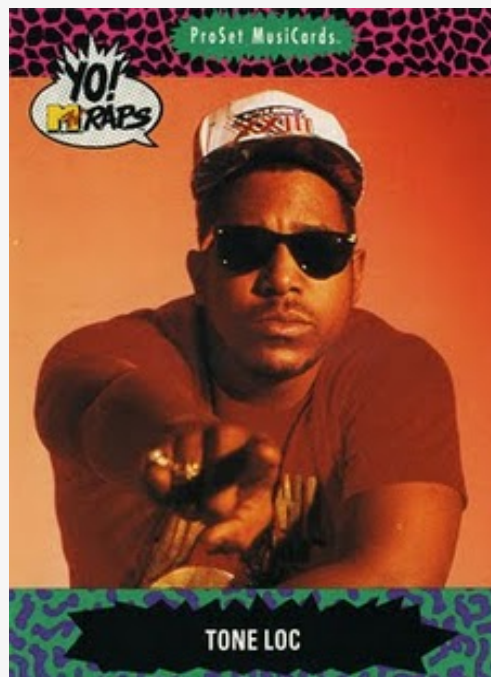
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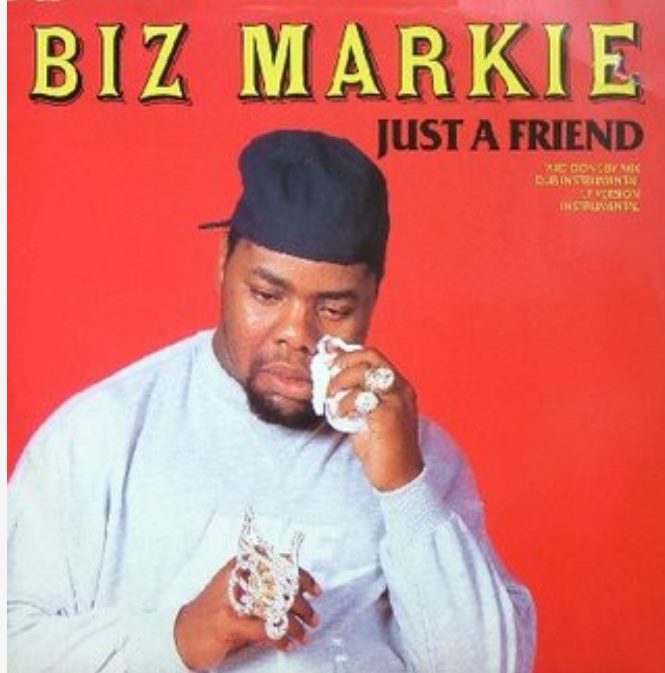
In Man's never-ending search for the ideal mate, much of the trials and tribulations of female courtship can be attributed to one simple fact:

Dudes are ["looking for love in all the wrong places"](#).

Young MC was a true teacher: "a girl runs up with somethin to prove, so dont just stand there Bust a Move"...

[why is it that all of life's most sage advice and sacred wisdom resides within the carefree lyrics of [1980's rap songs](#)? Seriously, how much did we all learn from Tone Loc in 'Wild Thing' and Biz Markie's "Just a Friend"...?? Those guys were like the Dr. Phil's and Nancy Grace's of an entire generation, parachute pants and all... They could break down priceless lessons about relationships, love, and life in 3 1/2 minutes and still squeeze in some [beatbox](#) time in between.]

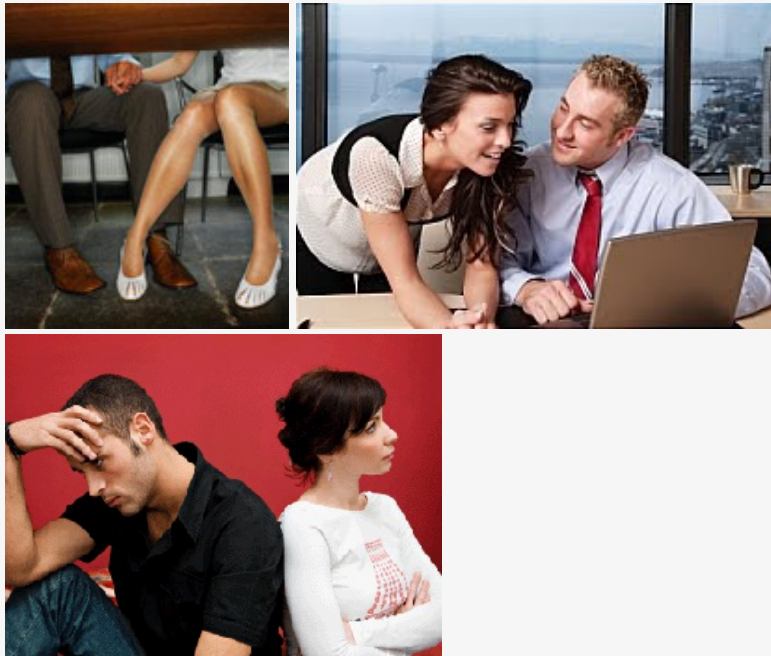




But I digress... The Wrong Places.

When did we ever, really, find the right girl while rubbing elbows and bumping brews in a bar? Right for the night maybe, but not enough to make it to the next weekend's festivities. Shoot, if she made it to Thursday trash day, that was a world record.

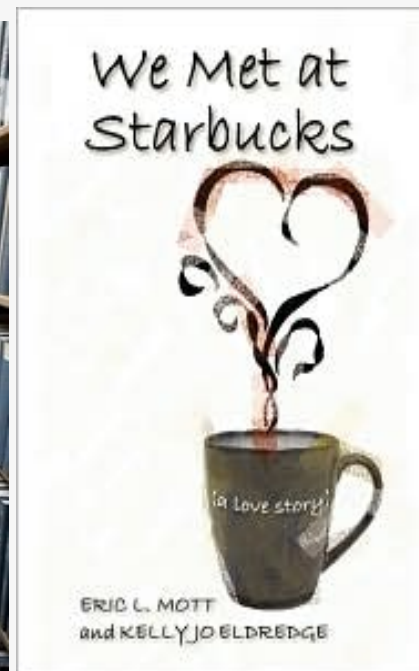
Work is a great place to meet some classy women and has all the ingredients of a spicy rendezvous: proximity, common interests/goals, nine consecutive hours of shared glances and flirtatious IMing on company time ... until you mix the naseautingly uncomfortable post-breakup team meetings and unapproving looks from [Jane the angry HR lady](#).



Grocery stores? No way... Maybe its me, but watching someone buy toilet paper, mayo, windex, and cat food is NOT a turn on.



Libraries and coffee shops are overrated. Any first meeting that begins with whispers is bound to end in screams.

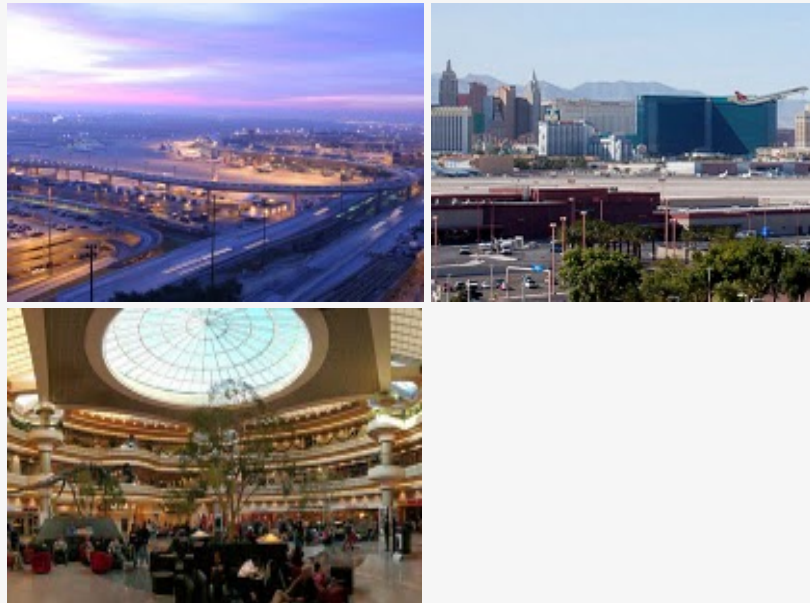


And something about that whole meeting girls at church thing makes me feel unholy. Though parents and relatives don't mind at all. It's an 'old folks' thing. They will spend the entire sermon inspecting row after row of single ladies/men. "Any girl who goes to church is a good girl." Cmon moms, have you seen [Footloose](#)?! If Kevin Bacon can make a preacher's daughter that crazy, just think of what I can do... (Sorry Lord)

A simple shift in our [Caveman](#) compass has the potential to unlock a whole new world of high-quality, low anxiety women that we've never dreamed possible... So, fellas, listen up... and [schedule your trips](#)...

The Airport. From check-in to security lines to the crowded counter at Chick-Fila... Airports offer a departure from the norm with guaranteed, on-time arrivals of droves of eligible women... and all you need to do is pile on the business trips or jump on the webfares to take advantage of this endless talent pool.

[Top 10 U.S. Airports to find love: 1. DFW 2. LAS 3. ATL 4. LAX 5. LGA 6. DTW 7. IAH 8. SLC 9. CVG 10. SFO]



L to R: Dallas - DFW; Las Vegas - LAS; Atlanta -ATL

Sophisticated and sexy. Attractive and alluring. Intelligent enough to hold your attention and intimidating enough to keep you guessing. The airport is crawling with women who have the right combination of ambition, curiosity, and adventure. They're career-oriented (i.e. they got their own cash!) and cultured (i.e. chances are they appreciate your [brown skin](#) or Southern accent or European t-shirt). These chicks are Hot. Smokin.

The only challenge that limits instant aviation-inspired mating is the very definition of the Airport itself: These ladies are on the move. They are going, not staying. And, aside from the rare stroke of Oceans 11ish good luck that lands one of these babes on your flight back home.... you'll need to be inventive and daring to make that magical connection. You'll need to act quick, or risk watching your dream girl board a plane to Rome. (And you know those Italian guys are cuter than you are.)



Now that doesn't mean stalking the cute brunette from the jetway to the water fountain and all through baggage claim (if you do choose this route, keep a safe following distance. the 3-person rule is usually a good bet... close enough to study her every move but far enough to limit the chances you end up in a dark room with a burly TSA agent)...

But it does mean an impromptu conversation in the departure lounge or a shared laugh in the Crown Room... an exchange of business cards at the gate or offering up your phone charger as she's searching for outlets... Make the impression and get the digits/email (settling for the 'find me on Facebook' crap is for losers. Be somebody!)... shoot her a text the next day and let the good times begin....

As the [Great MC Hammer](#) said, "so move outta your seat, get a Fly Girl and catch this beat..."

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Posted by \$ at 7:32 PM 3 comments Links to this post

Tuesday, August 11, 2009

FB

Ok, in four short weeks, ive gone from ['statistic'](#) to ADDICT.

I need help. Some type of therapy, intervention, and/or [seance](#)... Anything to remove these evil spirits from my brain and knock this damn devil off my shoulder.

The culprit? My new Blackberry Curve 8900.



Sure I've had a slew of bberry's over the years, including the first Curve, but this aint no standard addiction. That whole 'crackberry' thing was so five years ago... The fact that i sleep, eat, and shower with my bberry is pretty common practice. I even have a mini pillow and small fleece blanket for it... Again, all normal...

No, the new craving is for the amazingly enticing and 100% free version of [TEXAS HOLD 'EM](#) that comes with the new Curve... 5 years of having a blackberry and never has such an innovation been so captivating and confining at the same time... there's only so many useless internet sites one can surf during those boring Monday morning team meetings... and if ['brickbreaker'](#) was a mounting threat to mental health and workplace productivity, Hold 'Em is an all out epidemic... Elephant or Rhino Flu... this is big.



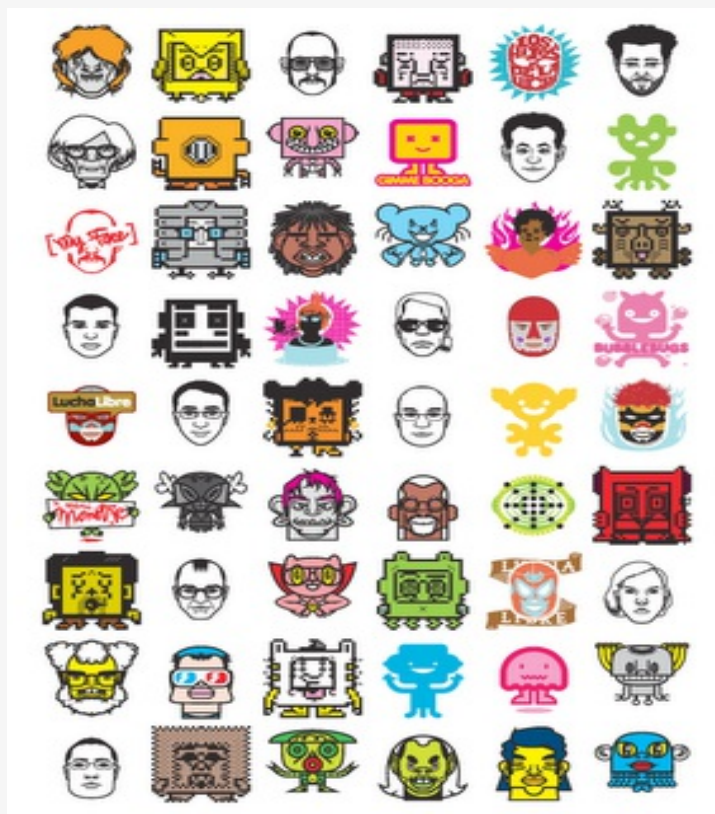


Free Poker on your work blackberry?? They might as well have put free porn on there or looped that scene from [Wild Things](#) over and over as a mobile screensaver... seriously, it's that mindblowing...

Yeah i know its not real money I'm gambling, but that doesnt take away from the maniacal urge to deal, check, call, and bet on my handheld... I wasnt a big Poker guy before i got this thing, just played here and there with my bros and watched the occasional [World Series table on ESPN](#)... but now, i cant put this damn thing down... there is no such thing as 'just one more hand'...

I've actually spent more hours today playing Poker on my blackberry than i spent at work! Instead of catching up on emails or cleaning up my desktop on the flight home from NYC last week, i was swapping Aces and calling bluffs against a tableful of worthy computer adversaries.... The blackberry folks have outdone themselves with this one...

Today i won a ficticious \$12K after a \$500 buy-in, and it's been the highlight of my month. Tomorrow I'm planning to graduate to actual online Poker... throw down a couple hundred bucks, just for 'fun', and see what happens... so, if i start hitting you up for cash or you see me with bloodshot eyes and a beard, please, call my mom or something... I'm on temporary Blogger hiatus until i bankrupt the Lawrence Fishburn-looking Avatar that always ends up at my table....



One things for sure... there's nothing better than the rush of going All-In.. even on a 2-inch screen.

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Posted by \$ at 9:00 PM 2 comments [Links to this post](#) 

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